
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends to the 2009 General Assembly:

1. **North Carolina should prepare to invest significant funds in improvement and expansion of rail network infrastructure. The Committee has identified the following needs and opportunities.**

- **Needs**

- **Rail capacity for economic development**

- Rail is a crucial component of the State's economy and future growth, particularly for the manufacturing, agriculture, energy, and construction industries.

- **Better service for the military**

- Particularly with Fort Bragg's role as a power projection platform, the State's military installations require rail service that is sufficient, secure, and dependable.

- **Better service for the ports**

- Continued expansion of international trade is projected but the State's ports face major competition on the east coast. To participate fully in this expansion, the State's ports, including the planned International Port in Brunswick County, will require excellent and competitive rail access to and through the port cities.

- **Track upgrades to accommodate heavier rail cars (286,000 lb)**

- Bridge and track and tie upgrades are still needed, particularly for the short lines.

- **Additional infrastructure to relieve current and expected levels of rail congestion**

- Renewed economic growth and expansion will lead to greater rail congestion, more freight-passenger conflicts, and lower quality service.

- **Rail capacity to relieve highway congestion**

- Highway congestion and maintenance costs can be alleviated by moving some freight from truck to rail.

- **Additional service for the growing number of rail passengers**

- Passenger traffic has increased by 30 percent on the *Piedmont* and by 15 percent on the *Carolinian*, North Carolina's Amtrak intercity services. Passenger service is also needed in other areas of the state.